

Rebuild Iowa Coordinating Council
“Road Ahead” Workshop
July 21, 2009
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Iowa Dept. of the Blind

In May 2009, the Rebuild Iowa Office and FEMA representatives held a Mid-Course Analysis Workshop in Ankeny, Iowa to examine the recovery and mitigation process with individuals from federal agencies, Councils of Governments, local Long-Term Recovery Committees and other recovery decision makers. Today, the Coordinating Council went through a similar process on a state level. Today, members met in groups to discuss issues surrounding Individual Assistance, Public Assistance and Infrastructure, and Long-Term Community Recovery. Below is a recap of what each discussion group identified as successes, roadblocks, action items and milestone measures for each category. The comments from both the Mid-Course Analysis Workshop and today’s Coordinating Council meeting will be compiled, analyzed and released in an official “Iowa Recovery Analysis” report. The information below will also be used as a basis for proposals for the 2010 Legislative Session.

Individual Assistance

Successes

- Funding for case management
- Funding for Iowa Unmet Needs Disaster Grants
- Mental health services specific to disaster victims
- Training for mental health response teams is underway
- Cedar Rapids Corridor Recovery business portal
- SBDC case management for businesses

Roadblocks

- Need more flexible state funding, programs work but are running out of funds
- Lack of centralized information and data, no common definitions
- Federal programs are not designed for disaster recovery
- Difficult to provide housing that is as affordable as what people lost
- There is never enough resources and funding
- Duplication of benefits process is slow and has negative, unintended consequences
- Restrictions in federal programs
- Banks and homeowners not communicating about mortgages
- Need information about people in federal programs and it is hard to get (ex. contacts for those in FEMA mobile homes)
- Impacted businesses are struggling with increased debt

- Impacted businesses lost customers and it is hard to get them back
- Lack of disaster funding for business recovery

Action Items

- Institutionalize the case management system to get it up and running faster in future disasters
- Provide support and connections for Long-Term Recovery Committees
- Continue training for mental health response teams
- Help protect impacted homeowners from foreclosure
- Identify and assist displaced renters, including those that are still receiving rental assistance
- Assist those still living in FEMA mobile homes
- Work to extend temporary housing assistance where needed
- Speed up buyout process
- Get applicants through the Jumpstart program process
- Track impacts of funding
- Advocate for a more standardized and coordinated system of federal disaster recovery funding

Milestones Measures

- Process the remaining Jumpstart applicants as quickly as possible
- Find permanent housing solutions for as many people as possible by the end of 2009
- Complete as many buyouts as possible in 2009
- Get the 2010 New Housing Production program up and running as soon as possible to give plenty of lead time
- Achieve changes in federal disaster recovery funding systems

Infrastructure/Public Assistance

Successes

- Most of the FEMA Public Assistance projects have already been approved
- I-Jobs funding will become available
- Funding for flood plain mapping using LiDAR has been secured

Roadblocks

- Not enough funding, especially for consistent infrastructure maintenance
- FEMA PA projects, that include building improvements or relocations, take more time and have more hurdles
- Insurance will now be required on many public buildings if they remain in the flood plain and is often unaffordable for communities
- FEMA does not pay for moving buildings and improvements often and communities need the funding to make these improvements
- Federal restrictions slow down the recovery process

- Not enough staffing at any level to take on disaster recovery work and do it quickly
- Lack of restrictions to building in flood plains
- Flood plain mapping is currently not accurate
- The planning needed to mitigate takes awhile and everyone wants decisions to be made quickly
- Funding cuts will impact flood recovery negatively

Action Items

- Move educational facilities out of flood plains wherever possible
- Wherever possible, do not rebuild buildings in flood-prone areas
- Create more comprehensive guidelines for building school facilities
- Work to educate community leaders and citizens about hazards and mitigation
- Complete new flood plain maps, as well as modeling, to increase the accuracy of predictions
- Consider new land use rules
- Strengthen 29C and the role of Emergency Management in assessment and planning

Milestones Measures

- Complete new flood plain mapping
- Complete FEMA PA process
- Encourage local planning to take impact of future disasters into account

Long-Term Recovery

Successes

- COGs were developed to do planning, but often lack the funding to do so on a large scale
- IDED is working on pilot projects to integrate “green strategies” in community development (Woodbine & West Union), and has developed some “green” standards (Green Streets criteria)
- Assistance in helping to move historic properties out of the flood plain using CDBG funds

Roadblocks

- Lack of funding
- Smaller communities may lack the technical and financial resources to do comprehensive planning
- Recovery takes longer if you plan and there is a lot of pressure to make decisions quickly; need to balance quick recovery with making the best long-term decisions
- Lack of coordination at all levels of government; or lack of mechanism to coordinate planning and other activities

- There are many different regional boundaries
- State programs currently fund development in flood plains
- 40% of communities do not have building codes

Action Items

- Adopt and enforce/incent Smart Growth Principles
- Score the distribution of state funds based on Smart Growth Principles
- Complete accurate flood maps
- Increase purchase of flood insurance
- Create alternative areas for development outside of flood plains
- Create incentives to develop outside of flood plains
- Increase multi-jurisdictional cooperation
- Consider quality of life as we rebuild
- Create more incentives for art and culture in projects
- Advocate for a more standardized and coordinated system of federal disaster recovery funding
- Archivist needed to provide help with planning and recovery of documents
- Better planning for disaster response for those with special needs
- Invest in regional planning
- Support small communities planning efforts
- Standardize emergency management funding, duties and reporting

Milestones Measures

- Increase comprehensive planning in the state
- Increase regional planning action